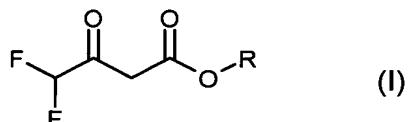


AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

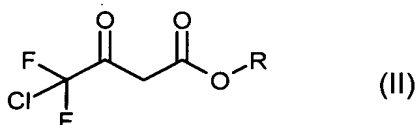
Claims 1-10 (canceled)

Claim 11 (previously presented): A method of preparing alkyl esters of 4,4-difluoroacetoacetic acid of formula (I)



in which R represents alkyl,
comprising

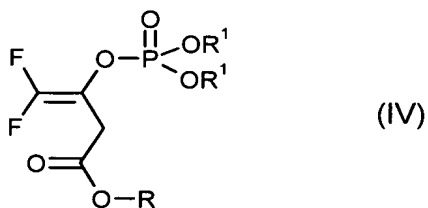
(a) in a first step, reacting an alkyl ester 4-chloro-4,4-difluoroacetoacetic acid of formula (II)



in which R represents alkyl,
with a trialkylphosphite of formula (III)

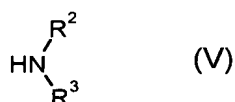


in which each R^1 independently of the others represents C_1 - C_4 -alkyl,
to give a alkylphosphonate of formula (IV)



in which R and R^1 have the meanings described above,

- (b) in a second step, reacting the alkylphosphonate of formula (IV) with an amine of formula (V)



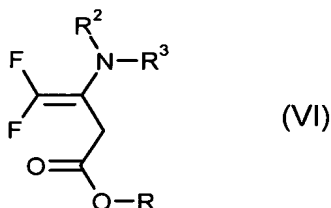
in which

R^2 and R^3 independently of each other represent hydrogen or $\text{C}_1\text{-C}_8$ -alkyl, or R^2 and R^3 together represent $-\text{CH}_2\text{-CH}_2\text{-O-CH}_2\text{-CH}_2-$, $-\text{CH}_2\text{-CH}_2\text{-S-CH}_2\text{-CH}_2-$, or $-\text{CH}_2\text{-CH}_2\text{-N(R}^4\text{)-CH}_2\text{-CH}_2-$, and

R^4 stands for hydrogen or $\text{C}_1\text{-C}_8$ -alkyl,

optionally in the presence of a diluent,

to give an enamine of formula (VI)

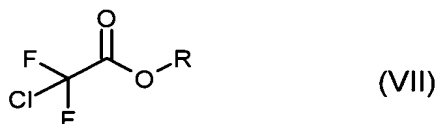


in which R, R^2 , and R^3 have the meanings described above,

and

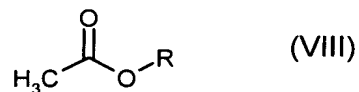
- (c) in a third step, condensing the enamine of formula (VI) in the presence of an acid.

Claim 12 (previously presented): A method according to Claim 11 in which the alkyl 4-chloro-4,4-difluoroacetoacetate of formula (II) used in the first step is prepared by reacting an alkyl chlorodifluoroacetate of formula (VII)



in which R represents alkyl,

with an alkyl acetate of formula (VIII)



in which R represents alkyl,

in the presence of a base and in the presence of a diluent.

Claim 13 (previously presented): A method according to Claim 11 in which, for compounds of formula (II), R represents C₁-C₈-alkyl.

Claim 14 (previously presented): A method according to Claim 11 in which, for compounds of formula (II), R represents C₁-C₆-alkyl.

Claim 15 (previously presented): A method according to Claim 11 in which for compounds of formula (II), R represents methyl, ethyl, n- or iso-propyl, or n-, iso-, sec-, or tert-butyl,

for compounds of formula (III), each R¹ independently of the others represents methyl, ethyl, n- or iso-propyl, or n-, iso-, sec-, or tert-butyl, and

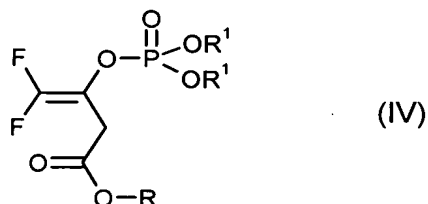
for compounds of formula (V), R² and R³ independently of each other represent hydrogen, methyl, ethyl, n- or iso-propyl, or n-, iso-, sec-, or tert-butyl, or R² and R³ together represent -CH₂-CH₂-O-CH₂-CH₂-.

Claim 16 (previously presented): A method according to Claim 11 in which the first step is carried out without diluent.

Claim 17 (previously presented): A method according to Claim 11 in which the hydrolysis in the third step is carried out in the presence of sulphuric acid, phosphoric acid, or hydrochloric acid, each of which is acids optionally diluted with water.

Claims 18-19 (canceled)

Claim 20 (previously presented): An alkyl phosphonate of formula (IV)

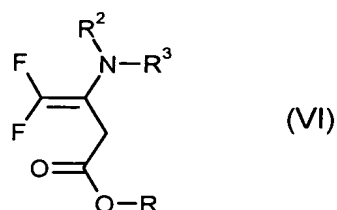


in which

R represents alkyl, and

each R¹ independently represents C₁-C₄-alkyl.

Claim 21 (previously presented): An enamine of formula (VI)



in which

R represents alkyl,

R² and R³ independently of each other represent hydrogen or C₁-C₈-alkyl, or R² and

R³ together represent -CH₂-CH₂-O-CH₂-CH₂-, -CH₂-CH₂-S-CH₂-CH₂-, or

-CH₂-CH₂-N(R⁴)-CH₂-CH₂-, and

R⁴ represents hydrogen or C₁-C₈-alkyl.